Table 3.1

***MAHLER:* SCENE INDEX**

Prelude to the Present: Mahler's First Dream Fantasy (0:00) ("I was the music")
Dream fantasy beginning with an explosion and fire that consumes Mahler's composing cottage followed by images of Mahler burning alive then of Anna von Mildenburg and his two daughters. The music is the first movement climax of the Tenth Symphony. The fantasy continues with Mahler's dream of Alma trying to break out of a cocoon and hugging a rock in the shape of Mahler's head (Third Symphony, first movement).

The Present (1): The Train (No. 1: 3:18; No. 2: 8:02/9:37)

1) Mahler's interview with Siegfried Krenek, a fictional journalist for the *Toblach News.* Looking out the window at the train station Mahler sees himself as the writer Aschenbach playing with the beautiful young boy Tadzio, not as characters in Thomas Mann's novella *Death in Venice* (1911), but as they will appear in the distant future in Luchino Visconti's 1971 film adaptation in which Aschenbach would be based on Mahler. Russell's brief parody includes the popular "Adagietto" from the Fifth Symphony which permeated Visconti's film. An uncredited Oliver Reed appears as a Station Master.
2) Alma's dream fantasy as a woman in Mahler's shadow (Third Symphony) (8:02), ending with "I wanted to be your shadow" (9:37).

The Past (1): Early Years of Marriage to Alma (11:12)
Flashback depicting Alma's ingenious ways of creating silence for Mahler to compose (Fourth, First, and Second Symphonies). Association established between the Sixth Symphony and Alma, a theme that Alma identified as the "Alma" theme (the second theme of the first movement).

The Present (2): The Train (21:30)
A brass band at a train stop conjures up Mahler's memories of his childhood prompting his exit to the train's toilet ("Tell them their music gives me the shits"). The escape to the toilet connects with the young Gustav's taking refuge in the bathroom of his childhood home to escape a beating from his angry father.

The Past (2): Mahler's Boyhood (26:10)
Flashback: Sladkey's Studio, where Gustav plays the beginning of a piece he calls "The Kitten Serenade" that later will become the opening of the Fourth Symphony. A fictional character named Nick educates the young Gustav about nature and life and plays "Ach, du lieber Augustin" and "Frère Jacques" on the concertina. The band music returns as Mahler is beaten by his father. The soundtrack transitions to the finale of the Third Symphony (first movement) as the young Gustav exits on a white horse. Many of the boyhood scenes are borrowed from two short stories by Isaac Babel, "The Story of My Dovecote" and "The Awakening."

The Present (3): The Train (43:05)
Entrance of Max, who represents the unnamed Walter Gropius.

The Past (3): Mahler and His Daughters (49:00)
Transition from Max's question "What religion are you?" to Mahler's conversation with his young daughters Maria (Putzi) and Anna (Gucki) inspired by the wood engravings of Gustave Doré (1832-83). They discuss God, heaven and hell, and other profound issues. From Mahler's perspective, "Hell presents a punishment made up by man, not God." The Doré engravings shown in the scene are from *La Grance Bible de Tours* (1866), which consists of 139 engravings based on the Old Testament and 91 based on the New Testament.

The Present (4): The Train (No. 1: 53:27; No. 2: 55:25)

1) Conversation on the train: Arrival of a fictional Princess and a discussion about death and the meaning of Mahler's Ninth Symphony. Mahler suffers an episode of acute chest pain while lifting his luggage on the overhead rack, an action accompanied by the same climactic passage from the Tenth Symphony heard at the fiery explosion that demolished Mahler's composing cottage at the beginning of the film.

2) Mahler's dream fantasy in which he imagines being buried and cremated while alive. After the cremation all that remains are two ghoulishly comic eyeballs. The music begins with excerpts from the funeral marches in Symphonies Nos. 5 and 1 followed by a passage from the Seventh as Alma dances a can-can bare-breasted on Mahler's coffin with Max looking on. Another provocative highlight of the dream is the image of Alma straddling the speaker horn of a Victrola that is playing a recording of Mahler's music. When Mahler awakens from the nightmare he is comforted by Alma.

The Past (4): Three Related Flashbacks (No. 1: 62:26; No. 2: 65:48; No. 3: 75:00)

1) Alma's flashback of Mildenburg accompanied by Mahler singing one of Alma's songs that Mildenburg and Mahler ridicule as derivative. Mahler explains that he doesn't want Alma to get hurt. On the word "hurt" the film transitions to No. 2 directly below.

2) Mahler's flashback within Alma's flashback. It begins with Mahler and his sister Justine (impersonating his wife) being interviewed by the Emperor for the position as director of the Vienna Opera. At the Emperor's request Mahler dances a waltz with Justine to the music of the Seventh Symphony. After the Emperor asks Mahler to drop his trousers to check on whether he is circumcised, it becomes clear that the Emperor is being impersonated by the mentally ill composer Hugo Wolf and that they are in the outdoor courtyard of an asylum. In a following scene, Mahler visits Wolf in his room at the asylum and tells him that "Our time will come."

3) Alma's flashback continued. To the music of Wagner's "Liebestod," Alma buries the score of one of her compositions, then collapses, weeping, alone in the forest.

The Present (5): The Train (77:00)
Mahler tells Alma more about his funeral nightmare.

The Past (5): Mahler's Conversion to Catholicism told in two flashbacks and one dream fantasy (No. 1: 79:00; No. 2: 81:30; No. 3: 89:28)

1) Flashback: a "Marx Brothers" scene with Gustav (Groucho), Otto (Chico), Alois (Harpo), and Justine (Margaret Dumont). Otto plays his "interesting" but not "beautiful" song "Sunset" on the piano in the background. After discussing the problem of gaining Cosima Wagner's support for the Vienna Opera position, the scene ends with Mahler's decision to convert to Catholicism, a decision that prompts a shocked Justine to drop a platter of stuffed cabbage and kasha.

2) Mahler's dream fantasy: "The Convert" (title card). Mahler's fantasy of his conversion to Catholicism with Cosima Wagner told as a silent film with music by Wagner ("The Ride of the Valkyries"). Framed by Siegfried's Horn-Call (Wagner) and "The Ride," the soundtrack consists of spliced excerpts from several Mahler symphonies (Sixth, Third, Ninth, Sixth, and Ninth). See table 3.2 below on the SUNY website.

3) Flashback to Mahler's traditional conversion in a church followed by a celebration, the latter brutally interrupted by the discovery of Otto's suicide. This deeply disturbing moment is accompanied by the third and final statement of the dissonant climactic passage from the Tenth Symphony, first heard at the beginning of the film when Mahler's composing cottage bursts into flames and again when Mahler clutches his heart while lifting a piece of luggage.

The Present (6): The Train (92:00)

Mahler insists that Alma decide between him and Max.

The Past (6): Flashback to the Death of Putzi (1907) (93:30)

To the music of "In diesem Wetter, in diesem Braus" ("In this grim weather, in this raging storm") (No. 5) and "Wenn dein Mütterlein" ("When your dear mother comes through the door") (No. 3) from *Kindertotenlieder* (Songs on the Deaths of Children), this final flashback shows the death of Putzi and the pantomimed actions of Gustav and Alma's actions that correspond to the words of these songs.

The Present (7): The Train (100:55)

A doctor arrives on the train and gives Mahler a clean bill of health (the Fifth Symphony and "Alma" theme of the Sixth). Alma decides to stay with Gustav and Max leaves. At the train station another doctor gets the news that Mahler has only one or two weeks to live. Instead of listening to what the doctor has to say, he greets him with the words, "We're going to live forever." On this poignant note, the film concludes with a freeze frame and a repeat of the "Alma" theme that ends the first movement of the Sixth, first heard in the happy flashback of Gustav and Alma's early married life.

Table 3.2

***MAHLER:* THE CONVERSION**

Title card: The CONVERT Starring COSIMA Wagner with GUSTAV MAHLER

1:21:30 Siegfried's Horn-Call
Prelude to Wagner's *Die Götterdämmerung* (Twilight of the Gods)

1:21:47 **Title card: VALHALLA Shrine of the Goddess of Music COSIMA WAGNER**
Sixth Symphony (second movement: Scherzo), mm. 1-42 (pp. 319-34)
[The music starts at 1:21:38]

- Mahler carries a Star of David and Cosima stands in front of a cross shaped like a sword.
- Mahler lays the Star of David at Cosima's feet.

1:22:36 **Title card: BAPTISM of FIRE**
Third Symphony (first movement: "Summer Marches In" or "What the Rocks Tell Me"), mm. 574-626 (pp. 64-75)

- Dressed as an Orthodox Jew Mahler jumps through fiery hoops and Cosima as a dominatrix cracks her whip surrounded by fire.
- A burning hoop emblazoned with a cross lands on the Star.
- Cosima gives Maher a hammer which he uses to forge a sword from the Star in a makeshift furnace that emulates Siegfried's forging scene in Wagner's *Siegfried*.
- While Mahler is forging the sword, Cosima is goose-stepping and giving the Nazi salute.

1:24:11 **Title card: Intercession of the SACRED HEART**
Ninth Symphony (second movement: Im Tempo eines gemächlichen Ländlers), spliced between mm. 260-75 and 313-346 (pp. 76-77 and 81-83) [The music starts at 1:24:15]

- Cosima carries a red heart with a cross on it; seven daggers have been placed around its edges.
- Mahler leans against the heart and Cosima, emulating a sideshow knife thrower, symbolically crucifies Mahler when she throws the seven daggers at him. Although Mahler remains unscathed, the daggers pierce his clothing, and the last dagger barely misses his genitals.
- Cosima tosses a knight's costume to Mahler, who is now in his underwear, having been shorn of his Orthodox clothes by the daggers.

1:25:25 **Title card: DESTROY the DRAGON of the OLD GODS**
Sixth Symphony (second movement: Scherzo), mm. 173-220 (pp. 336-43)
[The music starts at 1:25:31]

- Cosima gives Mahler a sword who responds with a pained Stan Laurel expression. She then instructs him to go into the fiery cave to slay the dragon. He does so, knees quaking.
- Singed by a gust of fire from the dragon, Mahler quickly runs out of the cave in a sooty blackface, kneeling and gesturing like Al Jolson singing, while still holding the sword.
- Cosima signals for him to go back into the cave.

1:26:41 Ninth Symphony (third movement: Rondo. Burleske), spliced between mm. 247-91 and mm. 444-458) (pp. 132-35 and 139-40)

- Mahler comes out from the cave holding a large hog's head with sparklers inserted into its snout.
- Cosima holds the hog's head.

1:27:03 **Title card: STILL KOSHER . . . ?**

- Mahler bites on the snout, which is now resting on a platter.
- The next shot flashes forward to a skeleton of the hog's head with Mahler licking the sword with relish. Not only is it not kosher to eat pork, Mahler breaks kosher rules further by mixing meat with dairy when he drinks a glass of milk. Mahler then goes to a teeter-totter with a cross symbol at its base.
- Cosima jumps on the upper end of the teeter-totter which makes Mahler fly into the air, after which he ends up standing on the cross still holding his sword. Having accomplished what was required of him, Mahler bows to Cosima, who has jumped up on the cross herself.

1:28:21 **Title card: . . . and then came the TALKIES!**
Wagner: "The Ride of the Valkyries"

- Cosima sings two stanzas, then Mahler joins her in a duet that they sing while sitting side by side on top of the cross. The words, "Now you're in the money" are likely a reference to "We're in the Money" from *The Gold Diggers of 1933* choreographed. They also imply what is perhaps a not-so-veiled reference to the frequent anti-Semitic trope of Jews and money. In any event, while they are singing, buckets of money fall from the sky. The song concludes with a grateful Gustav exclaiming, "You've got me the job."

Note: The page numbers refer to the Dover edition reprints of the first published edition of the Mahler symphonies.